The Role of Interested Adults, Advocates, and Guardians

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Heshima. n. Swahili. respect, honor, dignity

MISSION:
To identify, protect and empower unaccompanied refugee children, enabling them to live healthy lives.
OBJECTIVES

• To ensure healthy development by providing unaccompanied refugee children with a continuum of holistic care and support;

• To promote long-term self-sufficiency among unaccompanied adolescent girls;

• To identify and protect additional unaccompanied refugee children and create awareness about their special needs;

• To strengthen the capacity of the refugee community to provide long-term & quality care
Case Management & Community Participation

- Children’s Empowerment Project
- Heshima Safe House
- The Foster Care Program
DATA COLLECTION

• Demographic Information
• History of Abuse, including SGBV
• Flight History
• Current Circumstances
  • Vulnerability
  • Education
  • Residence
LIVING SITUATIONS

• 50% originally resided with foster family but were told to leave
• Children have moved an average of 3 times upon arriving in Nairobi
• 5 out of 10 girls currently living in the Safe House referred due to protection concerns
CHALLENGES: Legal Framework

Kenyan Children’s Act:

• States that it protects ALL children

• Includes “children affected by war and natural disaster,” but otherwise never refers to refugee children

• Explicitly states that a *formal* foster care parent must be resident of Kenya for more than 12 months and be registered with the Children’s Department
CHALLENGES: Short & Long-term Care

- Age: Child vs. Social Adult
- Temporary Residence
- Financial Hardship and Insecurity
- Anticipated Attachment & Distress
- Disingenuous Interest
AGE, MATURITY AND CAPACITY

• Youth as decision maker
• ‘Informal’ host is *not* legal guardian
• Heshima Kenya’s role as advocate
CONFLICT OF INTEREST

• Cultural Practices
• Insecure Host Environment
• Education
RECOMMENDATIONS

• **POLICY**: Include exceptions for urban UAMS & caregivers under foster care in Children’s Act (UNHCR/ GOK / NGO)

• **ECONOMIC**: Connect pre-existing and new caregivers to income-generating projects / micro-enterprise loans

• **EDUCATION**: Community Outreach & Training